

Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board & Grants Commission
October 7, 2020
5: 30PM
Human Services Board Room

Education Fund Board Directors present included Sam Jones, Cristina Magill, Norbert Turek, Jim Beers, Jeanne Mackowski, Jon Wade, Adam Alspach and Kandise Gilbertson. Julie Tourigny and Jill Brabec were absent. Grants Commission members present included: Jenny Maxwell, Mary Johnston and Keri Rusthoi. Also present were prospective GC members Mandy Maass and Lisa Ruff; Linda Thomas (SSEF accountant); Tim Miles and Brad Meeks (SSSD); Christy Sinner and Brian Hoza (HSD); Rim Watson (Soroco); and collaborative grant writer Emily Beyer. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes.

- **Call to Order:**

Sam Jones called the joint meeting of the Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board to order at 5:30 PM.

- **Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

- **Board Representative Comments**

There were no comments.

- **Board and Commission Orientation**

Sam reviewed the mission statement of the SSEF, noting the importance of “student facing.” He reviewed the structure of the EFB and the GC, the funding source for the Education Fund and presented a summary of the funds that have been granted over the years and how those funds have been spent. He described the grant review and approval process. Sam stated that the SSEF awards two different types of grants: those to school districts and those to community groups who operate programs in the schools of Routt County. He reviewed the proposal to move away from multiple specific grants to categorical grants for the school districts, noting that more emphasis would be placed on the accountability reports provided after the funds are spent.

Sam reviewed the ballot language that was overwhelmingly approved by the voters in 2018. He stated that the governance committee is currently in the process of updating the SSEF governing documents. He reviewed the roles of the EFB, the GC, the advisors, and the applicants in the process, noting that the districts should focus on needs, not allocations. Regarding accountability, Sam stated that the grant recipients should focus on the outcomes of funded programs (behavioral changes, measures of achievement), rather than only cataloguing the outputs (what was purchased, the number of kids served, etc.).

- **Conflict of Interest Forms**

Sarah will send conflict of interest forms to all EFB members. These will then be completed, signed and scanned, and sent back to her.

- **GC Appointments**

MOTION

*Jim moved to appoint Mandy Maass and Lisa Ruff to the GC. Jeanne seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **Summer Workshop Recap**

There were no questions regarding notes from the summer workshops.

- **Meeting Minutes – September 2, 2020:**

MOTION

*Jeanne moved to approve the EFB meeting minutes of September 2, 2020 as written. Jim seconded. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **Financial Report**

Linda reviewed the financial reports. She stated that revenues for the first three months of the fiscal year averaged 13.34% below forecast. The forecast is equal to last year's actual revenues. The revenues from July (deposited in September) were down only 4% over the prior year. She stated that the cash account contains \$1,189,091.43. This is more than sufficient to cover the outstanding liabilities from last year as well as the projected February payments on current grants. Linda stated that March collections were down 30.6% and April collections were down 25.5% from the prior year. Sam noted that the amount granted in June of 2020 was a 27% reduction from what was granted the prior year due to concerns regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sales and use tax revenues.

In response to a question regarding rescissions, Sam suggested that the rescissions could be approved via email. Sarah has contacted all grantees who have not provided invoices for reimbursement of funds expended during the 2019-20 school year. She said she would reach out again prior to the end of October if outstanding invoices remain.

Linda said that the audit was nearing completion. The final audit, as well as the Form 990, will need to be approved via email prior to November 15, 2020.

- **Grant Writer Annual Report**

Emily Beyer reviewed the grant report included in the meeting materials. She stated that she had submitted applications for 36 new grants and had also managed 20 multi-year grants. She said that including funds from all years of multi-year grants, the total amount awarded was approximately \$1.7million, which was 94% of the total amount requested.

Emily noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had less of an impact on the availability of grant funding than was expected, and that despite the uncertainty, most grants were fully paid. She said that mental health is currently a major focus of many granting agencies and organizations, along with pre-k education and innovative educational projects.

In response to a question from Sam, Emily said that she would not have the time to take on grant writing for MVMCS without compromising her work for the other schools. She added, however, that she would be able to share resources and opportunities, as well as ideas from past applications with MVMCS, and provide support for a MVMCS grant writer.

- **Categorical Grants for School Districts**

Sam described the concept of categorical grants for school districts and presented a sample application. Jenny stated that the document had been refined in conjunction with district representatives and the GC. She said that all districts have reviewed the draft application and have approved it. Jenny discussed the addition of a narrative section that will provide information on how funds will be spent, but without the detail required in the former application. She said that Mark Rydberg had provided sample narratives.

Keri said that while she really likes the bullet pointed guidelines that provide direction to the districts in filling out their applications, she still is not in favor of the move to categorical grants. She offered that process of grant writing serves to clarify the projects to be funded and guide accountability reporting. Sam suggested that the addition of the narrative would allow for a hybrid approach.

In response to a question from Cristina, Jenny stated that after the EFB sets the budget in March, the school districts would complete the application document based on the funding to be granted as determined by the allocation model. Unless there are major events that affect SSEF revenues, no changes would be made to the budget after March. Sam clarified that revenues received after the budget is set would be added to the following year's budget, as has generally been done in the past. He said that the intention is to create more predictability and flexibility in the process. Sarah noted that community groups would continue to use the same application process that has been in place for the past several years. Jenny said that the collaborative grant writer would complete an application document similar to that used by the districts.

MOTION

*Cristina moved to approve the categorical grant process for school districts, as presented. Jeanne seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **By-laws**

Norbert stated that a great deal of what had previously been included in the by-laws should be addressed in the policies and procedures. Cristina said that after further consideration, she feels that the RE-2 residency requirement for the EFB should remain in place. Norbert offered that the by-laws could be silent on the issue, and the residency requirement could be included in the policies and procedures, which are much easier to change. Norbert stated that all actions by the GC are effectively recommendations to the EFB. He said that how the GC is represented on the EFB could also be dealt with the policies and procedures. Jenny offered that out dated modes of communication (*e.g.* telegrams) should be deleted from the by-laws. Sarah suggested that the by-laws could refer simply to “notice” without specifying the means. All agreed that the important issue is when notice is received regarding meetings. There was a discussion of whether the language regarding the use of the funds should specifically refer to public k-12 education, or whether the language should be more open ended and refer only to public education in Routt County, which would mirror the language of the 2018 ballot measure. There was consensus that the k-12 language should be retained in both the by-laws and in the agreement with the City. It was decided that additional amendments to the by-laws were needed, and that action on this item should be deferred. Sam suggested that approval of the amended by-laws could be done via email.

- **Communications Plan**

Jeanne reviewed the communications plan, stating that its primary goals are to improve community awareness of the SSEF, to foster strong relationships with the districts, individual schools and community leadership, and to champion a positive sentiment towards the schools and the benefits of investing in education. The plan identifies strategies and action items associated with each of these goals and a timeline for communication pieces and community outreach. Jeanne said that if anyone has suggestions or questions regarding the communication plan, they should contact Jim or her.

- **Action items for electronic approvals**

- Conflict of interest forms
- Approval of rescissions
- Approval of final audit

- Approval of Form 990
- Review and approval of amended by-laws
- Review accountability reports

- **Agenda Items for March meeting**
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Set preliminary budget

The EFB meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.